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WALTER AND WILLIAM,

A N

HISTORICAL BALLAD;

TRANSLATED FROM THE

ORIGINAL POEM,

OF

K RICHARD CŒUR DE LION.

THIRD EDITION.

Sit mihi fas audita loqui——

Pandere res alta terra et caligineertas.

ÆNEIDOS, lib. 6.

L O N D O N,

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P R E F A C E.

AT a period when the public taste seems eagerly to grasp at every remain of ancient literature; when those goblins and spectres, which, in the dark ages of superstition, glided athwart the gloom, "making night hideous," are, at the magic spell of the poet, raised from the peaceful tomb, once more to carry terror,—not to the panic-struck murderer,—but into the more sacred recesses of a lady's dressing-room; at this period, it may perhaps form an acceptable addition to the public stock of entertainment, if we submit to the world a Poem composed by the brave and unfortunate Richard the Lion-hearted, when groaning in German dungeons under the rigor of unjust captivity.

Of Richard's poetical abilities this is not the only relict. The learned world is ac-

quainted with several other fragments. None, however, attain the same degree of poetical excellence, which this can justly claim, whether we direct our attention to the fable, the diction, or the versification. In these two last particulars, the translator is too conscious of the inferiority of his performance, when compared with the energetic melody of the original, not to solicit the public attention towards the extreme difficulty of preserving in translation the truly evaporable spirit of original poetry.

Had it not been for the kind assistance of a learned German Professor, the translator would have been obliged to relinquish every idea of restoring to the world a more noble monument of Richard's greatness, than can now be afforded by those victories, which the lavished blood and treasure of his subjects enabled him to gain; but of which the depo-

pulated plains of Palestine are the only remains.

Contrary to his general usage of the French tongue, Richard composed this Poem,—his master-piece,—in German. This circumstance accounts for the obscurity into which it had fallen; and to this it was probably owing, that it totally escaped the researches of the learned author, who first directed the public attention to the poetical performances of this Prince.

In consequence of these circumstances, this noble relict of genius has been suffered to remain unnoticed, growing daily more and more obscure, as the language in which it was written became more antiquated. The obscurity, in which this Ballad was enveloped, has, in a great measure, prevented its being dilapidated by the plagiarisms of more modern poets. Although in the works of some poets of distinguished merit, a few in-

stances may be perceived, which bear a similarity to some of the ideas which this contains ; yet minds animated by the same fire of genius, viewing the same object by the same light, must often consider it in the same point of view, that instead of invidiously pointing out these accidental coincidences, we should rather wonder that such similarities do not more frequently occur.

If then, in the perusal of this poem, the reader should perceive any passage that bears an analogy to any passage, which the works of a more modern poet contains, let him not rashly score down the latter as an imitator, or a plagiarist ; but let him consider whether the preceding circumstances do not naturally lead the mind into the same channel. Let him not without such deliberate reflection, pronounce his sentence in the harsh and imperious tone of a critic, successful in finding a fault, but let him, ere, with

an invidious snarl, he yelps his disapprobation, return the author thanks for the pleasure, which he has received.—Pleasure, did I say?—Alas! the pleasure of a true critic is always commensurate to the number of faults he can, or thinks he can discover.

We might multiply observation, and swell our pages with remark, but we have it not at present in view, to acquire celebrity as accurate commentators, or to be remarkable for the number of unmeaning words, which we could lavish on an obscure passage. The man who attempts to demonstrate an axiom, commonly concludes his labours with leaving the subject more involved than he found it. Such would be our situation were we to attempt any illustration of the authenticity of this poem. There are some philosophers, whose scepticism has arisen to such a height, that they have disbelieved their own existence. For such the Translator does not intend these remarks, conscious that the grossness of poe-

tical imagery can have few charms for minds, which by the contemplation of existence merely in the abstract, have been sublimed into nonentity.

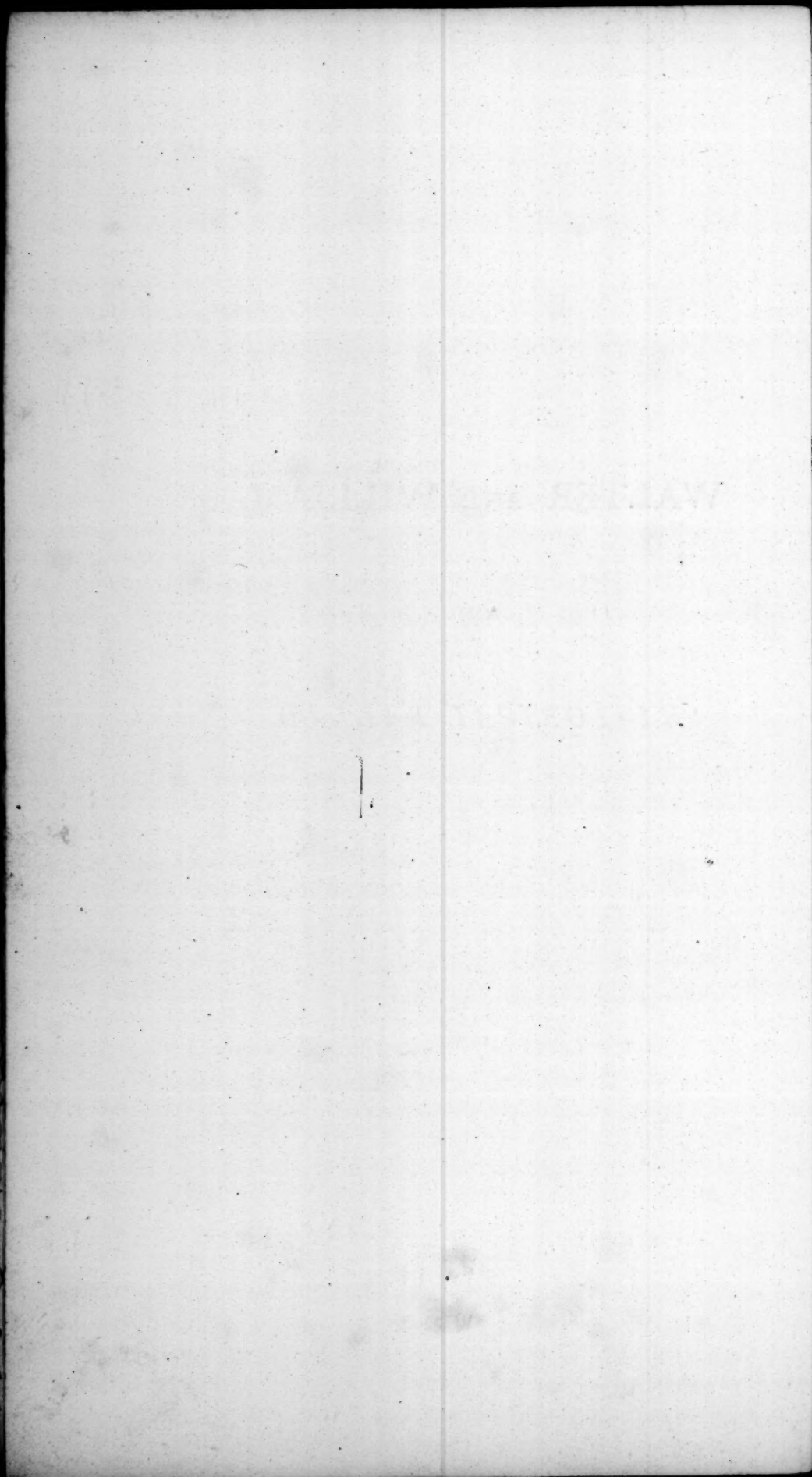
Any attempt to point out the most distinguished beauties of this poem, would be equally impertinent with any farther observations on its author. It has been often observed that the public taste, when it has received the sanction of time, is seldom erroneous. That sanction this poem has already received; and we trust the judgment of the present generation will coincide with that of their ancestors.

Conscious of many imperfections which are truly his own, the translator, not without solicitude, commits this work to the world, trusting that the numerous and striking beauties of the original may palliate, if not excuse those blemishes with which he has defaced it.

WALTER AND WILLIAM,

A N

HISTORICAL BALLAD.



WALTER AND WILLIAM,

A

BALLAD.

I.

'T WAS when athwart the dusky plain
Was thrown the veil of night;
And heroes, wearied out with strife,
Had ceas'd the lengthen'd fight:

II.

'Twas when the echoing hills no more
The trumpet's voice resound;
When fainting Warriors seek repose,
Their clasping arms unbound.

III.

'Twas when o'er ev'ry hill and dale
A solemn stillness reigns;
Save when at times, the rushing blast,
Deep murmur'ing sweeps the plains.

B

IV.

'Twas then beneath proud JOPPA's tow'rs
Lay Richard's British host,
The gallant troops, who Albion left
To seek PALESTINE's coast.

V.

Ye blooming chiefs, who unappall'd,
Beheld the roaring main ;
Ye, who at Glory's syren voice,
Forsook your native plain.

VI.

Ah! little think ye what betides
The piteous choice ye made;
Ah! little think ye what's entail'd,
On War's pernicious trade.

VII.

What boots it though your blooming brows
The twining laurels bind,
Will that relieve the suff'ring fire,
Ye left forlorn behind?

VIII.

Tho' on PALESTINE's fultry fields
Eternal fame ye gain,
Will that allay the mother's woe,
Who mourns her offspring slain?

IX.

What tho' o'erpower'd by pagan foes,
A hero's death you die ;
Will that assuage the Widow's grief?
Or wipe the Orphan's eye?

X.

Farewell ! ye blooming young and brave !
Some other shall ye praise ;
To me another theme belongs,
Earl WALTER claims my lays.

XI.

From Albion he—with Richard's host
He left his native plain,
And dimly view'd his mountains blue,
Sink in the distant main.

XII.

Fair was his form—his dauntless soul
Rejoic'd in deeds of death ;
To him no music was more sweet,
Than brazen trumpet's breath.

XIII.

'Tho' now immers'd in War's alarms,
His flagging spirits fail ;
His cheek, that once out-bloomed the rose,
Was now grown wan, and pale.

XIV.

One only brother WALTER had,
A chief of spotless fame ;
Who with him fought PALESTINE's coast,
Earl WILLIAM was his name.

XV.

In friendship's holy ties fast bound,
The noble brothers were ;
And nothing was by WALTER priz'd,
Which WILLIAM did not share.

XVI.

WILLIAM long erst, a chosen band
Had led from JOPPA's towers ;
Their purpose gain'd, towards the camp
Return'd the British powers.

XVII.

With open arms Earl WALTER flew
His brother Earl to meet ;
The troops arriv'd—Earl WALTER found
No WILLIAM there to greet.

XVIII.

Nor knew they, if on battle-heath
Oppress'd by foes he bled ;
Nor knew they if in thralldom drear,
A captive life he led.

XIX.

Then WALTER groaned—the gushing tear
Fast flow'd from either eye ;
The hero beat his manly breast,
And heav'd the bursting sigh.

XX.

But soon he wip'd the tears away,
And soon conceal'd his grief;
And girding to his loins his sword,
In battle fought relief.

XXI.

And now full many a turban'd head,
With trenchant steel he clove;
And thro' full many a Moorish head
His whirling lance he drove.

XXII.

And when from out the throbbing breast
He wrench'd the reeking blade;
He sternly cried, of WILLIAM's death
"Thou hast the forfeit paid."

XXIII.

When many a Knight, with streaming wounds,
Lay gasping on the plain,
All rough with wounds and drunk with blood
Earl WALTER spurn'd the slain.

XXIV.

All grim upon his fable steed,
Whose hoofs were dy'd with gore;
Thro' shatter'd files, and broken ranks,
Thro' hosts of foes he tore.

XXV.

Yet tho' immers'd in war's alarms
His flagging spirits fail;
His cheek that once out-bloomed the rose,
Was now grown wan, and pale.—

XXVI.

—'Twas at the hour when spectres roam,
The hour of dead repose;
When, save Earl WALTER's, every eye,
Within the camp was clos'd;

XXVII

The moon behind a fable cloud,
In silent darkness slept;
The blast no more athwart the plain,
In hollow murmurs swept.

XXVIII.

Earl WALTER's taper twinkling shone,
And dimly, bluely blaz'd ;
And oft from his uneasy couch
His aching head he rais'd.

XXIX.

When lo ! wide flew the bursting door,
A Knight in arms appear'd ;
His form was fair—his arms were bright,
His visor slow he rear'd !

XXX.

“ My long lost WILLIAM ! ” WALTER cried,
Soon as he view'd his face ;
And clasp'd him to his beating heart
With long and strict embrace.

XXXI.

“ But WILLIAM, why that cheek so pale,
“ Which lately was so red ?
“ And why so dim thy sparkling eye ?
“ Why hangs thy drooping head ?

XXXII.

- “ And why are all thy gleaming arms
“ Distain’d with crimson flood ?
“ Think not of that, ” Earl WILLIAM cry’d,
“ To night thou drink’st of blood.

XXXIII.

- “ E’en now deflower’d, and murther’d lies
“ My beauteous blooming bride ;
“ And deep—Ah deep! the fest’ring wound,
“ That rankles in my side.

XXXIV.

- “ What would’st thou WALTER on the man
“ By whom our breasts were torn ?
“ I would that in a whirl of fire,
“ His foul to Hell were borne !

XXXV.

- “ Haste ! haste ! clasp on thy shining arms,
“ Bestride thy fable steed ;
“ Come on ! come on !—ere morning’s dawn
“ The murderer shall bleed.

XXXVI.

- " My snorting courser paws the ground,
" He will not—cannot stay ;
" We've far to ride—the night is short,
" To vengeance haste away.

XXXVII.

- " To vengeance, WILLIAM !—why so late ?
" Remain till dawn with me ;
" WALTER, the deed was dark as Hell,
" As dark shall vengeance be.

XXXVIII.

- " My snorting courser paws the ground,
" He will not—cannot stay ;
" We've far to ride—the night is short,
" To vengeance haste away.

XXXIX.

- " To vengeance, WILLIAM !—let me raise,
" Our trusty men to aid !
" WALTER by one, the deed was done,
" By one be it repaid.

XL.

WILLIAM, I come—Hollo ! my horſe,
“ Thy horſe is at the gate,
“ Quick, quick away—my time is ſpent,
“ No longer can I wait.”

XLI.

Out ruſh'd the Knights—with eager haſte,
Each bounded to his ſteed ;
O'er hills and dales, thro' ſtreams and floods,
They glance with meteors' ſpeed.

XLII.

Hoarſe howling now the ruſhing blaſt,
Invades the groaning plain ;
The light'ning glares, the thunder growls
In ſheets deſcends the rain.

XLIII.

And yet the brother Earls around
The ſtorm innoxious play'd,
Nor by the light'ning's fearful glare,
Their courſers were diſmay'd.

XLIV.

Of lofty trees an aged wood
Now open'd to their view;
There with'd in death, three bodies lay,
Beneath a blasted yew.

XLV.

On each pale face, by light'ning scath'd,
Th' unwholesome dew distill'd,
Earl WALTER shudd'ring turn'd his head,
With unknown horror thrill'd.

XLVI.

Oh WILLIAM! WILLIAM! WALTER said,
"Who doom'd these men to bleed."
"Thus fall the murd'rer," WILLIAM cried,
And onward urg'd his steed.

XLVII.

Their hoofs with nimble speed once more,
The foaming couriers ply,
O'er hills and dales, thro' streams and woods,
With meteor's speed they fly.

XLVIII.

Now, by the light'ning's lurid glare,
Beside them on the plain,
Earl WALTER view'd an ancient pile,
And held his tighten'd rein.

XLIX.

In vain he held—The snorting steed
Disdain'd the weak controul;
And urging on, th'affrighted Lord,
Approach'd the fated goal.

L.

Swift thro' the gate, the courfers bound,
The courts with echoes rung,
And from the lonely tow'rs, the owls
The dirge of midnight sung.

LI.

And now within the inner court,
A sudden halt they made;
"WALTER, alight, the time is come,"
Earl WILLIAM sternly said.

LII.

Aghast and shudd'ring, trembling, slow,
The Earl obey'd with dread,
But WILLIAM grasp'd him by the arm,
And on impetuous led.

LIII.

And now they reach'd the massy hall
Where torches grimly bright,
Stuck round the walls with sulph'rous glare,
Emit infernal light.

LIV.

A bloated corse, disfigured, pale,
Lay rotting on the ground ;
Fest'ring in blood, which erst had flow'd,
From many a gaping wound.

LV.

And now, at every gaping wound,
And ev'ry gangren'd sore,
The cold, long worms crept slowly in
To suck the putrid gore.

LVI.

And yet, upon this loathsome corse,
A beauteous female lay ;
Her cheek upon his cheek reclin'd,
She kifs'd his mould'ring clay.

LVII.

But deeply plung'd, a reeking sword
Transfix'd her lovely side ;
And still the steaming pavement o'er,
Floated the lukewarm tide-

LVIII.

With horror sick, and shudd'ring pale,
With thrilling dread aghast,
WALTER at length his blood shot eyes
Upon his brother cast.

LIX.

From off his brother on the ground,
The ringing armour crash'd ;
His form of more than mortal size,
With heavenly radiance flash'd !

LX.

" Behold yon bodies cold in death !
" With thunder's voice he cried ;
" Yon putrid mafs ere while was I,
" Yon beauteous form my bride."

LXI.

" That bride, whom in this caſtle *thou*
" With luſtful phrenzy wild,
" At midnight hour, with ſavage rape,
" And inceſt, damn'd, defil'd.

LXII.

" And when againſt *her* unknown ſpouſe,
" Thou aim'dſt th' aſſaſſin's knife,
" Thou gav'ſt the weapon doom'd to drink
" *Thy* abſent brother's life.

LXIII.

" To-night ſhe from her priſon burſt
" And flew to ſeek her Lord ;
" She found him—thus—ſhe kiſs'd his cheek,
" And fell upon his ſword.

LXIV.

- " Oh WALTER ! could that artless tongue
" In vain a pleader prove ?
" Could not those tears, those piercing shrieks
" Thy soul to pity move ?

LXV.

- " Well did'st thou chuse the midnight gloom
" Th' infernal deed to veil ;
" Yet deeds of rape, and deeds of blood,
" Not midnight can conceal.

LXVI.

- " Ah WALTER ! did no heavenly voice,
" Inform thy erring mind,
" That glutting thy infuriate lust
" Was rape with incest join'd ?

LXVII.

- " That when to the assassin's hand
" Thou gav'st the sharpen'd knife,
" And bade him pierce *her* husband's heart
" Thou fought'st *thy* brother's life.

LXVIII.

“ The partners of thy guilt are gone,
 “ Them Heavenly vengeance found ;
 “ Smote by the lightning’s scorching blaze,
 “ They prefs the blasted ground.

LXIX.

“ What would’st thou, WALTER, on the man,
 “ By whom our breasts were torn ?
 “ Thou would’st that in a whirl of fire,
 “ His soul to Hell were borne !

LXX.

“ That ruin on thy head thou’st heap’d,
 “ Thou had’st for others will’d ;
 “ ’Tis thou O WALTER, art the man—
 “ Now—Be thy wish fulfill’d !”

FINIS.

